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POLICY ISSUES

Developments resulting from the work of the Joint IAEA/IMO/UNEP Working Group on the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel by sea

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

1. At its seventeenth session, the Governing Council welcomed the Executive Director's initiative to involve the United Nations Environment Programme with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the preparation of future policy on the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel by sea. By its decision 17/13, the Council specifically requested the Executive Director to report to its next session on future developments resulting from the work of the Joint IAEA/IMO Working Group on the carriage of irradiated nuclear fuel by sea.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to take note of the present report of the Executive Director.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Assembly of the International Maritime Organization, at its eighteenth session from 25 October to 5 November 1993, adopted, by resolution A.748(18), the Code for the Safe Carriage of Irradiated Nuclear Fuel, Plutonium and High-Level Radioactive Wastes in Flasks on Board Ships (INF Code).

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* UNEP/GC.18/1.

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2. Several delegations reserved their position concerning the Code, expressing the opinion (A.18/11/8) that until complementary requirements have been included in or associated with the Code, the INF Code is incomplete and unsuitable for implementation as an IMO Code of Practice. The complementary requirements deemed necessary by Solomon Islands and those others who reserved their position at the 18th Assembly are:

- A credible and effective liability regime to compensate damage and take effective measures to avoid damage to the environment, human life, property and the economy;

- Credible route planning and notification and consultation with coastal States;

- Restrictions and exclusion of certain routes;

- A credible emergency response plan, included in the voyage plan, with respect to the ship and cargo;

- Sufficient information on the material and packaging included in the voyage plan;

- Equipment and devices which will facilitate the location and salvage of the ship and/or cargo;

- A compulsory requirement to salvage radioactive material and the pre-determination of the responsibility for this in the voyage plan.

II. DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE

3. The issue of safe transport of these materials is referred to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee. Consultations are ongoing.

4. The issue of emergency preparedness and response is referred to the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC). MEPC accepted the IAEA offer to revise its recommendation on emergency response and submit the revised text to MEPC for consideration. This work is ongoing.

5. The issues of routing restrictions and the liability regime are referred to the IMO Legal Committee and, for the latter, also to IAEA's Standing Committee on Liability for Nuclear Damage. Consultations are ongoing.

6. The issues of packaging and handling of radioactive materials and shipboard emergency plans are referred to the IMO Sub-Committee on the Carriage of Dangerous Goods. Consultations are ongoing.

7. The IMO subcommittees on communications, navigation, containers and cargoes, and standards of training and watchkeeping have also been requested to consider relevant aspects of the requirements complementary to the INF Code. Consultations are ongoing.

8. The IMO committees have been instructed to prepare a draft progress report based on the inputs from the various committees concerned to the nineteenth session of the IMO Assembly for consideration. This session is tentatively scheduled for 19-24 November 1995. Preparation of this draft report is awaiting the input from these committees, which must first have their part of the overall progress report approved by their own constituencies. This approval will take place at the meetings of these committees scheduled to take place during the late spring and summer of 1995.